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LAST ORDERS



**"AS FURTHER LOCKDOWN
RESTRICTIONS ARE ANNOUNCED -
IS THIS THE END OF THE PANDEMIC
OR THE BEGINNING OF THE END FOR
STORMONT?"**

The voice of The Loyalist telling it like it is

It seems like every month now instead of focusing on Unionism and Loyalism we are discussing Covid and the various restrictions and threats associated with it. However what is clear is that the politics of Northern Ireland is not set up to deal with the implications and this current pandemic has shown the very obvious tensions that exist within the mandatory power sharing arrangements but will they be strong enough to bring down something which is proving to be very unpopular amongst the general public?

When everyone signed up to the Good Friday Agreement in 1998 it was meant to be the start of a transitional phase of politics, a transition that would build trust and working relationships and embed the harder line elements of the political world into democracy. How long was it to last for though and what would be the result once the transition has ended, how would politics here be normal in any way considering our past 40 years? The Peace Process rolls on like the large gravy train many compare it to; even after three years of stalemate when salaries and expenses continued to be paid we don't seem to be any farther on in reality now that Ministers are in place and supposed decisions are being made to benefit everyone in society. Of course it didn't help that after the New Decade, New Approach agreement was signed a worldwide pandemic hit our shores but surely something like that would unite all political shades in a sort of War Time style joint approach; unless of course it is Northern Ireland.

Sinn Fein played the game

as always claiming unity in the Executive but pushing to follow the Republic of Ireland, calling people "balloons" and a "shire of bastards" and then setting their own guidelines when it comes to Funerals. Incidentally, it has recently come out that the Deputy First Minister has still to be interviewed by the PSNI about her role at the Bobby Storey funeral. Selfies and "old boys" companies were rife that day as all the old operators got together to send off one of their own yet what was the health effects from this and why hasn't this been pushed. We have also seen the return to education of our University students and with the focus on the Holylands area it has been widely reported about the breaches and parties that are spreading the virus. In fact, just last week one house seen multiple fines issued as PSNI entered a South Belfast property to find 19 people hiding in a bedroom with a further two up in the attic. This led to thirty-two fines being issued and four warnings for breaching the rules yet that same morning reports came out that the party had started again and a further eight fines were issued. The lack of a responsible attitude towards Covid is being felt by everyone in this country and the R Rates (rate of infection) are not coming down yet we see numerous multiple occupancy homes in places like the Holylands for students which becomes like a ghost town as the mostly rural based students return home at the weekends to possibly further spread the virus to their own family and neighbours.

This month South Belfast UPRG have made a very critical statement about the whole political mess we are in and hopefully something can be taken on board by our politicians as many of the general public

are saying enough is enough. The restrictions are there, and they must be followed but the hypocrisy in some of the rulings doesn't seem to be reflective of reality or commonsense. Close contact trade such as hair dressing and beauty salons aren't deemed as being safe despite having been shown to affect the rate by 0.05%. Yet the biggest weapon seemingly out there is to close hospitality where proper guidelines had been followed and after a current 4-week closure guess what, the R number hasn't fallen at all in fact it went up. How many local pubs are the heart of the community where they are based? How many people see somewhere like this as a refuge to counter loneliness or have a home of sorts where staff and regulars will keep an eye out for them. Is it really a commonsense approach to close those establishments where abidance to guidelines is being followed and allow people to gather at private homes instead? Footfall is usually high at this time of year in retail and no doubt it has fallen but when we were at the peak of the first lockdown how many happily stood in large queues to selfishly stockpile toilet rolls and tins of beans and didn't have any regard for the health and wellbeing of those standing around them.

There is no precedent to this, and no one can claim to have the answers but surely some commonsense mixed with a strong sense of political unity can see us through. Yet to the casual observer this clearly isn't the case.

To close, it was certainly a surreal

Remembrance Sunday and while the Editorial Staff usually partake in a large South Belfast parade numbering around One Thousand followed by a smaller Lisburn walk of around half this. This year was very different indeed and yet looking at all the pictures sent through the same effort and respect was paid to our fallen as in every other year. Instead of large parades local gardens and murals were visited by small groups; graves were visited, and crosses left as a mark of respect and wreaths adorned every memorial and tribute that are marked with respect every other year.

Covid has harmed people there is no doubt of that but the spirit of community and friendship has been strengthened further and it is so heartening to see the Loyalist community stand proud through all of this. Hopefully, our elected representatives can take this on board and start to follow suit.

Quis Separabit





Jackie McDonald

Straight talking from the heart of Loyalist South Belfast

REMEMBER OUR FALLEN, RESPECT OUR VETERANS

"A DAY THAT WE ALL CAME TOGETHER BY STAYING APART"

It really was a very strange Remembrance Sunday with so few people in attendance and no Bands or Parades in South Belfast. I missed out on our usual Wreath Laying Ceremonies in Seymour Hill because of rearranged timings but I did call up to see those attending and to wish them well. Alan and I joined our good friend Bobby at the Roden Street Memorial Garden along with our colleagues from Donegall Road and Lisburn Road where ten Wreaths were laid with social distancing observed and face masks being worn as per Government advice. We were pleased to see that none of the local residents attended, they usually would turn out in their hundreds, but they displayed great discipline and support for our National Health Workers by staying at home. We proceeded to the Sandy Row Memorial Garden and observed the same protocol, having been joined by colleagues from Sandy Row, again several Wreaths laid social distancing and once again the local residents stayed at home as per the government advice. The usual procedures from Donegall Road to Sandy Row would usually be a Parade of well over a thousand South Belfast Loyalists accompanied by six bands led by Govan Protestant Boys who would travel over from Glasgow for the day and it has always been both inspirational and emotional to see that so many wanted to take part in our Remembrance Sunday Parade. Many hundreds of local residents would usually have lined the route along Donegall Road and Sandy Row to watch the Parade but again because of Government advice and concerns for their family and friends, they stayed indoors. Hopefully normal service will resume next

year.

We then proceeded to Taughmonagh and the Memorial Garden where there would normally be a Parade around the Estate with Govan Proddy Boys and Finaghy True Blues leading us, hundreds would take part in the short parade with most residents lining the streets and gathering at the Memorial Garden for the Wreath Laying Ceremony but once again for safety reasons, the local people stayed at home. All of our Memorial Gardens are very special places; places to reflect and remember those who are no longer with us although this Remembrance Sunday may have been a different day for all of us we all have the same respect and appreciation for those who gave their lives and suffered so much in the two World Wars and many other Conflicts. The reason I'm explaining in so much detail about our Wreath Laying in various areas of South Belfast is so that I can express my gratitude to not only those who attended the Ceremonies but to those that didn't. I know how important it is for Unionists / Loyalists to pay their respects and to show their appreciation to our Fallen Heroes on Remembrance Sunday, its traditional for all of us, the fact that everyone showed their awareness of the Covid-19 threat and listened to advice from Stormont showed myself and my colleagues that our people really do care about their Families, their Community and of course National Health Staff.

"A DAY THAT WE ALL CAME TOGETHER BY STAYING APART"

Our Communities are playing their part in the fight against this deadly virus and now its time for our Politicians to show their appreciation to our Business Community and to reconsider some of the restrictions they have imposed on them and us as some of these decisions just don't make sense. We understand that peoples health must be our elected Representatives priority but

there is surely a compromise where at least some within our Business Community can begin to function again. Our Hospitality Sector, with all the precautions they have taken, are surely prepared and capable of looking after customers safety the same can be said of close contact businesses such as Hairdressers and Nail Bars on a One To One basis. Restaurants being allowed to sell food but not to sell alcohol seems ridiculous, when food and drink go together and are a major part of Hospitality here in the Province. As I write this our Politicians still can't agree on the best way forward, and we should maybe ask ourselves what would we decide if we were in their position, they have a lot to take into consideration, but I believe there are amendments that can be agreed to with safety in mind. Whatever decision they come to I hope they explain exactly what they have decided because up until now we have all been scratching our heads about what we are or are not allowed to do. With Christmas just around the corner (and so many families struggle at the best of times) we all need to know what the immediate future holds, things might never be the same as they once were but we are used to difficulties, change and hardship in Northern Ireland, we can adapt as long as we know why. There's speculation about a new vaccine and that's probably the best news we've heard this year but to set up the whole structure to inject so many people and for the length of time it will take to have the required effect we are probably months away from being immune so everyone will need to show this same 'Remembrance Sunday' discipline and attitude. We aren't out of the woods yet but hopefully we could be nearing the beginning of the end of our nightmare. Until that is all sorted we need to take the same precautions as we have been up until now, more people than ever are testing positive for

the virus and sadly more are dying now than in the 'First Wave'. Be safe everyone, take care of your friends and families, and show the same support for the NHS as we did when we were applauding them every Thursday night.

Just a further few words to mention the appointment of Danny Kinahan as Veterans Commissioner. I wish him every success whilst realising just how difficult and complex his job will be. It's reckoned there are as many as 120,000-150,000 Veterans here in the Province and the Commissioner will presumably want to speak to as many as he possibly can, maybe through elected Veteran Representatives Groups or, whenever possible, to as many individuals as possible. However Danny manages to go about his duties he will have some tragic stories to listen to with many emotional recollections from Veterans and their families who were so often the victims of Republican violence. There are Legacy issues for the Commissioner as well so I applaud Danny for accepting such a difficult position he will never please everyone no matter how honest and sincere that he undoubtedly will be. In most other Countries Veterans are respected and appreciated but here in Northern Ireland they are still seen as 'The Enemy' by a large section of the population, to be Prosecuted and Persecuted. To us in the Broader Unionist Family, they are and always will be thought of as members of our Security Forces who risked their lives, and all too often lost their lives, to defend everyone in Northern Ireland. Even today, when the Conflict is supposed to be over every member of our Security Forces is under constant threat from criminals masquerading as Republicans. We salute them all, those who fought in Two World Wars, and every conflict since, including the 'Troubles' here, those who are no longer with us and those who still are, GOD SAVE THE QUEEN

SOUTH BELFAST UPRG EXPRESSES DISMAY AT STORMONT COVID-19 DISAGREEMENTS

The latest debacle in the 'Stormont and Covid' soap opera has just concluded as we write this report (13th November 2020). After days of claim and counter claim and negative briefings and poisonous rumours being thrown around we now have a decision on restrictions and the opening of certain types of businesses. Employment decisions and livelihoods were kept waiting all week whilst a decision was finally reached. The regulations have now been extended by a week. One solitary week. It took all the might of the political thinkers in Stormont a whole week to come up with this bright idea. The strategy worked out was a mishmash between a combination of medical and scientific advice as well as the practical needs of businesses crying out for certainty and for a sense of finality. Some shops and private enterprises have already thrown their hands up in despair and either closed for good or have shovelled in yet more money to keep things afloat whilst the politicians dither and delay. It could and should

have been so much better from Stormont and we need to analyse why there has been such a deficiency when it comes to joined up cooperative thinking from an assembly that could have covered themselves in glory with a positive forward thinking plan to help all citizens during this awful pandemic.

When the Westminster government handed over powers to the Welsh and Scottish and Northern Irish local assemblies they did so in the now discredited belief that local politicians could make definitive local decisions based on their knowledge of the specific circumstances that that particular country had. So Wales had a complete lockdown (including banning people from buying books and magazines in Tesco's!), Scotland could highlight Nicola Sturgeon playing the astute leader (it didn't work-the nursing home scandal has seen to that) and Northern Ireland via Stormont could play a leading role in delivering for all the people of Northern Ireland. It has been an utter shambles.

Michelle O'Neill has adopted a type of puritanical desire to tell us

all what not to do whilst doing exactly what she wants to do through the period of this terrible epidemic. She has then deliberately sabotaged (or at least attempted to sabotage via press briefings and social media comments) what had been agreed by Stormont (by mid week) and has now adopted the new approach (of hers anyway), that we must all "follow the science and save lives". If only she had conveyed that approach to her IRA colleagues. They have this amazing belief that you can congregate at funerals and GAA matches and be completely immune from catching even a common cold. Ms O'Neill has a tendency to brief against every other political party at every opportunity and then sit back and watch the fireworks. Sinn Fein cannot be taken seriously as a political party as they just won't accept the basic principles of partnership government. This was their key opportunity to show that they had matured and could make and take the difficult decisions that would benefit the whole country. Instead they reverted to type and

criticised the "British" government response in "the North" whilst failing to offer any constructive suggestion within the Stormont debates.

Naomi Long (leader of the Alliance Party) loves to strut her stuff (in a political sense) when the chips are down. She has this clever little act of passing her party off as the reasonable compromise driven party who come through for the people when the going gets tough. Call us cynical but her party just loves adopting a superior tone with everyone and benefits greatly from some very strange decisions by both the DUP and Sinn Fein. Or rather, whilst the two main parties fight against each other the Alliance Party sneaks through a simple little proposal and plays the 'look at us, aren't we sensible' ploy. Which more often than not works very well and the Alliance then gains more votes and more influence. If we and others can clearly see this why can't the DUP in particular see this and combat the strategy with their own nuanced and practical proposals? Why allow the Alliance Party the easy opportunity of scoring a goal? By midweek Naomi Long was being touted as the 'saviour' of the latest proposals and praised by the media. Some great coverage for her and her party but it left the rest of the political parties looking somewhat out of step and intransigent.

Robin Swann (Health Minister) has tried to be something of a statesmanlike figure but



**FIRST MINISTER
ARLENE FOSTER**



**HEALTH MINISTER
ROBIN SWANN**



**SECOND MINISTER
MICHELLE O'NEIL**

more often than not his predictions (deaths in particular) have been so far fetched and doom laden that people have then ignored his more sensible ideas and advice. We value his earnestness but we are not sure who interprets the actual scientific figures themselves because his subsequent covid projections have been wrong at the start, wrong during the middle of the pandemic and wrong by the time the second wave came. His latest statement concerning the non treatment of cancer patients due to the upsurge in covid patients taking up space in hospitals was crass, insulting and an awful shock to cancer patients who are clinging on to hope. This was a time for reassurance and hope but (obviously not intentionally) Mr Swann has failed to handle the public mood and the desire to see hospitals do everything they can for all patients. Just not good enough Mr Swann.

The DUP appear confused, riven by infighting and rather slow to act. This is as disappointing as it is

self apparent. Something is clearly wrong at the heart of a party that usually prides itself on taking important decisions and getting those important decisions right. By declaring that the end of the last four week semi-lockdown would then see a complete ending of restrictions completely, they left themselves open to getting a nasty red face when ultimately faced with the scientific evidence of the fall of infections being not enough to go through with such a plan. Everyone could see it but they stuck to their guns until it became apparent that they couldn't get the lifting of restrictions through Stormont. Arlene Foster appears outflanked and outmanoeuvred and not for the first time. Whatever is going on within the internal machinations of the DUP it needs sorting and it needs sorting fast. This is not personal. Our country depends on a professional organised and effective government and we only need to look at the past fortnight to see that this is not happening. Blame can be easily apportioned sometimes and it tends

to be levelled at the usual suspects. But we can clearly see that every political party in Stormont needs to up their game and do what is right for the people.

Meanwhile we can only feel sorry for pubs, restaurants, hairdressers and every other business that has been so hard hit financially as well as receiving no practical and effective political leadership and support. Unemployment is soaring. Many businesses are going to the wall. The government furlough scheme is helping some but it is only holding off the inevitable issues that will hit hard in 2021. High streets look so run down, People are looking run down! This was (and still could be) an opportunity for Stormont to shine, to show joined up thinking and progressive ideas, for politicians to work together for the common good. Instead all we have seen is a sectarian squabble and a wholly unworkable list of restrictions that have placed terrible stress on so many people. Many of our young people are suffering from uncertainties with

school and with exams and mental health problems are surfacing. Some parents are struggling to cope and are relying on local community support. In fact it is only the magnificent efforts of local community groups and volunteers that is keeping a lid on a whole multitude of mental health and financial difficulties and it just shows that the people are willing to work together during this most difficult time but Stormont is failing to show the same example!

We call on all those with influence to pull together and deliver as we move into the Christmas period. It seems likely that Covid-19 will dominate 2021 and beyond so it must be the sole focus of Stormont and all the politicians working therein to sit down and work at solutions as opposed to nitpick and think of political self interest. Frankly it is time for Stormont to deliver. All the citizens of our country (irrespective of political affiliation) are watching. We can only hope that politicians hear our plea and work together for the good of all.



Around the Union

George Galloways and "Alliance For Unity's" Political Charge!

His momentum (not linked to Labour) has been direct and forceful on social media and various other media articles. Before we look at how, and why, his venture back to politics in Scotland will be one of the largest shifts in politics in this country let's look at who he actually is.

George Galloway was born in Dundee to an Irish mother and father from Scotland. He was an MP in Glasgow, for Labour, in 1987. In 2003 he was expelled from the party for, amongst other things, calling for Arabs to fight against our British Troops. He continued in politics through working with the Workers Party. He also, allegedly, supported Saddam Hussein although he denies this. His international views include supporting the Palestinians against Israel. He also stated that Northern Ireland doesn't exist as quoted below from his verified twitter account:

Twitter 2018

"There is no "Northern Ireland". It is six counties in the north of Ireland. It should have never been in the British state in the first place. It is past time for a United Ireland and let Britain Brexit cleanly. It's not rocket science".

"You know that I've opposed separatism all my life right? In Scotland in Ireland in Cyprus in Palestine in Iraq in Yugoslavia in the USSR in China? You do

know that right? I'm against the partition of small islands, I'm Labour, I'm with #Corbyn Why is that hard to understand?"

"I'm a supporter of Irish UNITY. The clue is in that word. I'm against imperialist occupation of other peoples. Scotland is not occupied by anyone except the same class which occupies the English and the Welsh too. Scotland England and Wales WERE the Empire, including in Ireland!"

So, from the above we can see what his views are and define them as wanting specified countries above not to be separated in any form. From Ireland, to Cyprus, Palestine, Scotland etc.

Some may be asking themselves, why on earth is this article being written for such an audience? Which is a point I'm coming to. Many Unionist/Loyalists in Scotland grow angry at the sound of George Galloway. Some say he supports and sympathises with the IRA, hates the British etc and forms allies with those we would call our enemy around the World. His past tweets above give an insight into his thinking and it is this thinking that has just created a tidal wave across politics in Scotland and will no doubt have caused many conversations in the echelons of the SNP.

GEORGE GALLOWAY WANTS TO RID SCOTLAND OF THE SNP! HE WANTS THEM GONE! He does not



believe in Independence because, as above, he doesn't believe in separating countries, unless "imperialism" is prominent, which, in Scotland, it isn't as we are the same people in Scotland and England.

Galloway has mass support behind him: He has created @AllianceforUnity and called on Labour Scotland and Scotland's Tories to unite with him to work the election next year to ensure the SNP vote share drops. The SNP have unleashed their social media attack hounds.

The politics of Scotland are a bit of a quandary now. We have someone, with a mass of support behind him, who would normally be someone the PUL Community would have no time for, wanting to pull down a party which has suppressed our community for over a decade since there majority. Will Labour Scotland and the Tories here unite and engage in dialogue to find agreement for standing candidates agreed by them to ensure pulling SNP

down? Time will tell, and with the recent news that prominent Labour figure Jean Anne Mitchell had resigned from her party, and had joined his 'Alliance For Unity', this is a clear indicator that George has things on the move and for the first time in a long time, a viable fight to unseat the Nationalists in numerous constituencies.

With the recent scandal of nationalist Margaret Ferrier, George has committed to ousting her of the Rutherglen and Hamilton Seat in the upcoming Holyrood Elections in May, and I wish him all the best in doing so.

The main questions the PUL Community have now is:

- Will George Galloway gain enough support to suppress the SNP and independence?
- Will Labour and the Tories unite?
- Can we trust him?

At the end of the day, the SNP have dominated Scottish politics for 13 years, so if we really want change, what choices do we have?



@theloyalistQS



Around the Union

VILLAINS AND HEROES STURGEON/TRUMP SIMILARITIES

For every hero, we have a villain. For every piece of bravery, there's an act of utter cowardice.

A tale of two moments, 100 years apart, which bring pride and shame in equal measure to everyone in Scotland.

I take you to Givenchy, France, on June 12, 1915 during the Great War, where an injured British officer James Martin lay helpless in No Man's Land as an almighty fire-fight erupted around him. The story goes that he was surrounded by German soldiers, entrenched barely 15 yards away: they were planning to capture the stranded lieutenant but thankfully they were forced back by British machine gun fire from across the burning field, not much longer than a football pitch.

As smoke and fire filled the sky, a Scottish lance corporal seized his opportunity. His name was Willie Angus and prior to the Great War he had played football for Celtic before enlisting with the Highland Light Infantry. He came from Carluke, Lanarkshire, as did James Martin. They had signed up together and the man was not about to desert his friend in his time of need. Angus crawled on his hands & knees, and with shells and bullets peppering the ground around them, he desperately pulled his friend back to their line.

This man was a proper hero. The bravest of the brave and even though he wore the Hoops in just one competitive match he was surely going to go down as a Celtic great?

Now let's talk about the cowards and those who continue to hide their faces with scarves, disrupt the Remembrance Sunday minute's silence and deface murals. Those who still get their rocks off chanting about their love of the IRA and hatred for the British Army, many years after the British military campaign in Northern Ireland officially ended. They bounce around with their tops off, fuelled by Buckfast, drugs and a misguided sense of self-importance. Absolute scum of the highest order with no self-respect, no self-control and if truth be told, doing so with the full support of their club.

Unfortunately they are able to do this without fear of ridicule from their club or fellow fans, allowing this to fester and grow throughout the support.

The question I'm pondering is what can be done? Can this be stopped or have we allowed it to go on unchallenged for so long that dishonouring our fallen and The Poppy is 'just one of those things'?

As predictable as always, the outcome of the US elections has brought out none other than Scotland's First Minister Nicola Sturgeon.

Just when we think she can't out-do herself, she produces even more breathtaking hypocrisy; this time, asking Donald Trump to respect the outcome of a democratic vote. Yes, this is the same Nicola Sturgeon, who from the minute the results were out, has categorically refused to accept our outcome of the 2014 Scottish independence referendum. She then led the SNP's 'Stop Brexit' campaign, seeking to overturn the result of another democratic referendum that did not go her way.

Might we Scots ask that she respects the outcome of our very own referendums, and refrains from embarrassing herself, and Scotland, by interfering with a foreign nation's elections?

REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY IN WHITBURN

With travel restrictions in place, and regular trips were off the cards for this year, many groups had a very different Remembrance Sunday this year.

In Whitburn, the regular parade and service organised by the armistice committee was cancelled due to the ever-changing restrictions, meaning individuals and organisation had to pay their respects in their own small services throughout the day.

Despite the situation, the turnout at the town's war memorial throughout the day was fantastic, with people coming and going almost all day.

Representatives from the Loyal Orders in the town, accompanied by members of Whitburn Flute Band, who usually take part in the parade, laid wreaths in remembrance of those who made the ultimate sacrifice for our country.

A lot of hard work has gone into the renovation and upkeep of the war memorial and surrounding area in recent years, and those involved can be extremely proud of what they have achieved!

We Will Remember Them!

"A DAY WE ALL CAME TOGETHER BY STAYING APART"



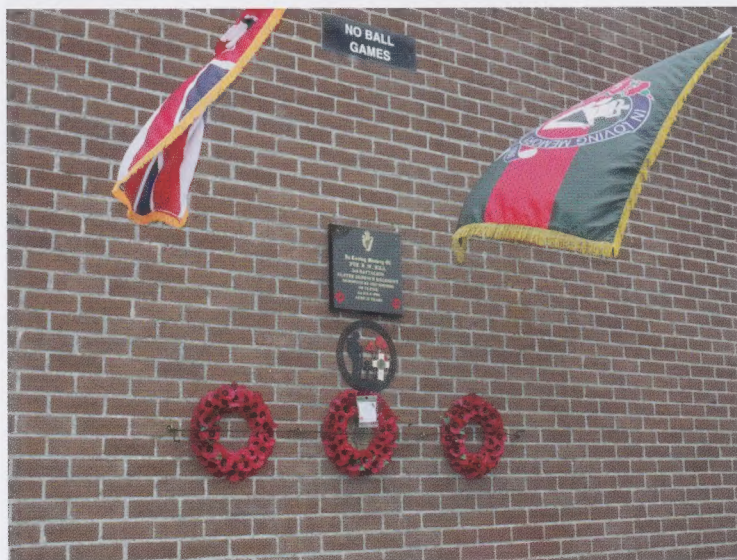


South Belfast UPRG NEWS UPDATE

Working for the future of South Belfast and beyond

The Remembrance Day commemoration at the Memorial Garden in the Langley Road estate was a far different affair from previous years. The Covid-19 outbreak and subsequent restrictions put paid to the normal large attendance and we were conscious of ensuring the safety of the participants that did attend. In accordance with the guidelines we held a very small service and maintained social distancing at all times. Masks were provided and the whole garden area had been cleaned up using the appropriate chemicals. The guidelines stipulated no more than 20 could attend and we were well below those numbers.

The Chairman of South Belfast UPRG laid the solitary wreath. Eight other representatives laid small crosses. In a brief speech the Chairman stated that though these were difficult times the act of remembrance was so important and he was glad to be able to attend. He spoke of his need to visit the beautifully maintained garden throughout the year to find inner peace and tranquility and also to look at the names on the Memorial stone and to think of departed colleagues. He praised the volunteers who maintained the garden through all weathers and thanked those who attended on a cold Remembrance Day morning. Those in attendance also remembered Pte Robert Hill (UDR), murdered on the 1st of July 1986. In the UDR journals Robert Hill is mentioned thus; "Pte Robert W Hill Age 22 (Part Time) E. Coy 1st July 1986. Killed by a booby-trap bomb under his car outside his house in Drumaness, wreckage from the car was found over a 100 metre radius. He was single and off duty at the time of his death." But many remember Robert as far more than just a brief mention in a journal. His Sunday school teacher described him as a "quiet lovely young man" and many others attested to his friendly character and loyalty to his family. Robert is remembered every day and missed by all. Normally the attendees would head to Belfast for the main Remembrance parade in Sandy Row, but it had been decided to just keep things as local as possible and not travel. With all areas having small localised events it was for health and safety purposes that we could not travel down and meet with friends and colleagues. Normal service will hopefully be resumed next year.



COVID THOUGHTS

This month we share two differing opinions on the Covid experience and think its important to share these thoughts:

As I write this, we are currently preparing to come out of a second lockdown/circuit breaker, or whatever you want to call it. Labels to help people bow down to the never ending restrictions put in place, to fight an invisible virus we know very little about. As a reasonably well educated male I like to read and research the goings on in todays world but I am still unsure of the effects these restrictions are having to combat the virus. It all seems a bit hopeful rather than a properly thought out plan. A severe lack of assertiveness and very little explanation has resulted in rage and anger directed towards a bumbling and very split government.

I have always wanted to believe that in a life or death situation, any right minded governing officials could put all else aside and show a united front to assure the people of this country that together we can overcome all. Well this is a life or death situation and still I have to sit back and listen to an absolute circus of clowns talking nonsense pretending to know what the future may hold making promises that cannot be kept and stabbing one another in the back at every turn. Those that hold our future in their hands cant even trust each other, so why would we trust them with anything that matters?

I recoiled in horror over the last few weeks as one disaster after another began to reveal itself. Large sums of money misallocated and not returned whilst we still await answers. I'm sure if it is forgot about for long enough it will be replaced by another fumble of the ball. And surely enough the spotlight moves to the circuit breaker extension drama. Northern Ireland comes to a standstill as small businesses are trampled over again.

All tarred with the same brush.

Arlene makes a promise that she had no right to make, then tries her best to follow through, no matter what the consequences. It was Bold but very foolish.

A fatal mistake that I believe may cost her dearly as the people of Northern Ireland will show

a complete lack of confidence in her ability to lead and make the necessary decisions regardless of the outcome for herself. This isn't a popularity contest instead its about saving lives. Everyone deserves the right to live regardless of who's pocket it hurts as we will survive without the luxuries we are afforded.

This is just one of the major issues that plagues the Stormont wage stealers. A Deputy First Minister that shows clear allegiance elsewhere, continues to do her own thing, shamelessly spouting someone else's words to undermine anyone and everyone that gets in her way. Its not too long ago that she flaunted the rules to gather in a large crowd at the passing of a murderer. How many lives did that cost? How many people were infected? A deliberate betrayal going against the First Ministers wishes and speaking against decisions previously agreed upon is enough to out an untrustworthy snake in the grass. Let's be honest, she's been on borrowed time for quite a while now.

The list goes on and these are only the things we know about. An embarrassing comedy of errors and a lack of any clear leadership has to result in resignations when this chapter comes to a close. Trust is everything in a relationship. Leaders must trust each other in order for the people to trust the system. I see no trust. Therefore I no longer believe in a broken system where the rich do as they please and the poor are lead to the slaughterhouse. A system where every voice should be heard is just a false narrative. The common voice is drowned out by greed as the collar is tightened. Families made to live on 80% of minimum wage as ministers collect their hefty salaries, all whilst running a show of confusion.

Where do we go from here?

Unfortunately the Virus leaves us little option but to buckle up and grit our teeth but will we get the leader/leaders we deserve?

I won't hold my breath... More like a wolf in sheep's clothing...

COVID AND ME

Aside from Christmas and the family connotations it has there are two very important dates in the calendar for me namely 12th July and Remembrance Sunday. Both are very different but similar in so many ways and times when friends get together and we are able to enjoy the fellowship and social occasions that come with them. The Twelfth was certainly different to what I am used to, but the differing lockdown conditions meant that a different type of celebration was held and one which many said was more personal and, in some cases, enjoyable. However, as a Loyalist Remembrance Sunday is something very special and this year was incredibly surreal. No parades, no visiting comrades, no socialising, and no real chance to reflect on those who went before me as I was housebound with Covid.

I think its been a tough few weeks but more so from my own point of view where I had been sceptical of the whole media circle surrounding Covid and the reality which in my head was a lot different to what the media portrayed. I found it frustrating that people were able to stay off work so long shielding and perhaps in my line of work there was a suspicion of how genuine people actually were with their underlying conditions. Even now as I finish my last few days at home before being allowed out into the big bad world, I am watching with great suspicion the news with all the political bickering over lockdown restrictions and when they should end. Yet now that I have had the Virus and experienced it, I know it's real, I know how contagious it is and I'm worried about the more vulnerable in society.

There are however some positives and I have to say the fact that one hour after telling of my positive diagnosis a local community worker was at my door with a card, a massive box of fruit and veg and other supplies. I have been in undated with offers from friends, and indeed many others in the community who I mightn't know that well, to go to the shops and bring supplies around and it

is so heartening to know that 'My Community' is one to be proud of.

Covid for me was a quite strange experience, I started to feel a mild flu and went to bed thinking I had the dreaded "Man Flu" which I'm prone to but would be able to sleep it off overnight. At my partners insistence I arranged a test and agreed to lock myself in to the bedroom for a few hours pending the result coming in. My worst fears were confirmed when I received an early morning email and text and the feelings of trepidation then took over as I started to fear the worst not for myself but for my partner who is a Type 1 diabetic. Things were only to get worse after she herself then tested positive and hearing about my mother also showing signs and being bedridden. Working back to where I might or might not have become infected I was able to pin point a ten minute visit to my parents home (where I thought I had kept my distance) to my mother catching it from me. My sister has since contracted the virus from her, and we are hoping my father (who has in recent years had a double heart bypass) doesn't catch it. I'm a healthy 45-year-old but those of whom I have passed it to aren't as lucky as me, so the feeling of guilt and fear has overwhelmed me.

I have since watched social media and seen the various memorial gardens and intimate services that have been done all within guidelines and social distancing laws and it is so heartening to see the resolve and fight that exists within our community. We can all get through this and be in a much better place but equally we need to take this serious; I don't know how many times I have sat and watched on Facebook, Snapchat and other social media avenues the footage of parties in homes and man caves, people sitting side by side with no care in the world then potentially going home to elderly relatives. Its sickening and irresponsible.

Please stay safe and act in the best interests of your community and family, only then can we all get through this and return to a normal life and society.

29TH ANNIVERSARY OF BOMB IN CRUMLIN ROAD PRISON

"On Sunday 24th November 1991 a bomb exploded inside C-Wing of the Crumlin Road Prison killing two Loyalist Prisoners and injuring many more. In the context of the Northern troubles this is not an incident that many choose to remember but it was without doubt one of the worst atrocities ever to have taken place inside a Prison.

Twenty Loyalist Remand Prisoners were in C-Wing dining hall when the bomb exploded. It is not widely known but this number could have been much higher as over sixty Loyalist Prisoners were in the process of entering the dining hall when the bomb exploded prematurely. We believe the real target was the full sixty Loyalist prisoners, so if the bomb had of exploded 15 minutes later the fatalities and injuries would have been much higher.

The Provisional IRA had brought the Bomb into the Prison, assembled it and placed it behind the radiator under the TV in C Wing dining hall with the full knowledge that this position would achieve maximum destruction. Although two Loyalist Prisoners lost their lives, Colin Caldwell and Rab Skey and numerous more were very seriously injured the IRA at the time would have been extremely disappointed as their target was many more.

Many questions remain unanswered about this bomb attack. Following the explosion, the Northern Ireland Office instigated two inquiries both of which proved to be a farce. A senior Governor in the Prison Service was requested to inquire into the effectiveness of the search processes and other procedures at the prison and to consider what changes, if any, should be made. And Lord Colville was asked to review the operational policy at the Belfast Prison for the management of paramilitary prisoners. Neither of these inquiries produced any

meaningful results. In fact, many key members of the prison staff on duty at the time of the explosion were not even interviewed. Both inquiries were simply a paper exercise to help the Northern Ireland Office and the Prison Service manage through an embarrassing but severe breach in security.

In addition, the RUC conducted a murder inquiry of which nobody has ever been charged or brought to account and it is very clear that this case was never treated seriously by either the Northern Ireland Office, Prison Service or the Police.

Many questions remain unanswered: How did the IRA get the bomb into a high security prison? How long was the bomb in the prison before it was planted and detonated? When the bomb was inside the prison why did the regular search processes not discover it? Was there collusion between the IRA and Prison Staff? Or did he IRA threaten or intimidate a member of the Prison Service to smuggle the bomb in? Twenty-six years on since the explosion all of these questions remain unanswered.

The Republican Prisoners on C Wing had used the dining hall prior to the Loyalist Prisoners being let into it for their tea. And it is now known that they conducted a meeting in front of the TV which was directly above the radiator where they planted the bomb. This meeting was used to provide



cover for the bomb to be planted. All of this was witnessed by prison staff and captured on CCTV yet not a single person has ever been charged.

Every Republican Prisoner present was fully aware that the bomb was being planted therefore were party to the attack and should have been charged with either murder or conspiracy to murder.

Why did this not happen and more importantly why was the decision not to prosecute the Republican Prisoners not challenged. And why has nobody

called for a full public inquiry into this horrific incident?

Considering that the explosion took place inside a high security prison in which two men were killed and many others very seriously injured it beggar's belief that this incident has not been investigated and the perpetrators prosecuted. This was a hideous crime conducted by the IRA inside a high security Prison and we believe that there has been a sustained attempt to erode it from history."

The above is an extract from an article printed in the Loyalist Magazine in December 2017. Some readers might question why we keep repeating this story as it is only one of the many atrocities of our troubled past? The attack on remand prisoners in the Crumlin Road Prison on Sunday 24th November 1991 should never be forgotten as we owe it to the families of both Rab Skey and Colin Caldwell and the many other seriously injured Loyalist Prisoners, that this brutal and unresolved attack is never forgotten.



IN MEMORIUM

**Rab Skey and Colin Caldwell
Murdered by the Enemies of Ulster
Sunday 24th November 1991
Gone but Never Forgotten**

Bands Corner

Monthly round-up of news from the marching band scene



CHARITABLE DONATION TO MENTAL HEALTH STORY

In light of our current state of affairs in Northern Ireland I would like to share a little heartwarming community centred story with you to possibly share.

The officers and members of the Lambeg Orange and Blue Flute Band had the privilege of providing our chosen charity Emerge with the cheque of £4000 to Samantha Evans and a few of her colleagues. Samantha went on to say, "as Founder and CEO of Emerge Counselling Services I will be forever indebted to Lambeg Orange & Blue Flute Band. With their extremely generous donation of £4000.00, after a successful golf day on 6th September, we have been able to purchase laptops and extra equipment to launch our new online counselling service. In the ever changing world of 2020 this equipment is essential for my team and I to remain in contact with clients who have to self-isolate or are currently shielding. It also provides us with an opportunity to decrease isolation and loneliness during lockdown, to work with clients who are experiencing high levels of anxiety due to Covid-19 and to support clients further afield, perhaps university students or families that are currently separated due to

travel restrictions."

If you would like to use any of their services including online counselling you can contact Emerge via telephone on 02892 445060. Email: info@emergecs.co.uk Website: www.emergecs.co.uk. You can also contact a member of their team via Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. Please note that the social media platforms are not monitored 24 hours per day.

Now that the dust has finally settled on our first ever charity golf day we can now reflect on what turned out to be a fantastic day for all involved was, and a big win in the battle against mental health.

10 months prior to our event at Edenmore, members of the band chose to partake in an awareness evening hosted by Debbie and Paul of Emerge Counselling Services. The idea of the night was to help us understand and delve deeper into the subject of mental health and suicide prevention. The training offered our members an insight into signspotting for potential warnings of someone who may be dealing with depression or suicidal thoughts. The training also gave us a wider knowledge on the subject of dealing with family or friends, or even strangers, and the importance of opening



up to anyone and reaching out to those in need or whenever in need of help. We are forever grateful for the wonderful training and presentation provided to us.

From this moment on there had always been discussions and murmurs of hosting our very own golf day and involving a charity to benefit from the proceeds. In light of recent events in May of this year, and with our own members' experiences around the subject of mental health and loss, we only felt stronger that Emerge should be the charity of choice.

Further discussions took place at the end of July in preparation to host the golf day at Edenmore, and the date was set for Sunday 6th September. This only gave us 6 or 7 weeks to plan and gather everything we would need to host a day that would live long in people's and the band's memory. A separate committee was established to primarily focus on running the day and preparations. Members of the band then began to put out the feelers to gather the interest from bandsmen, members of the loyal orders, friends and

family to see if we could get the numbers. The feedback was astonishing. Within 24 hours of advertising our event we sold out our planned 25 fourballs, and received a massive influx of sponsors.

The day itself could not have turned out better. The weather provided perfect playing conditions for our golfers on an immaculately kept course. There was a lot of talent on display, and a lot of talent also severely lacking in other areas for some. Refreshments and snacks were provided around the course for all. On the day the event was won by Carl Kilcullen. Other prize winners were Sam Gibson for best gross, Ally Ferguson and Adam Lyness with the nearest to the pins, and Bessbrook's Jordan McKenzie with both longest drive prizes.

The officers and members of Lambeg Orange and Blue Flute Band would once again like to thank the staff at Edenmore Golf and Country Club for hosting us and their very kind hospitality, to everyone who participated in the event, sponsored a hole, helped out on the day, donated to the JustGiving page and shared our social media posts to reach a larger audience. With all of you help we raised £4000 for Emerge Counselling Services. We would once again like to thank all who were involved in raising funds for such a crucial new way of dealing with mental health in a world of uncertainty and at a time where people need heard the most.





LETTERS to the EDITOR

Write to loyalpublications@yahoo.co.uk

Dear Editor,

I would like to take this opportunity to express my frustration, anger, and disappointment with our elected representatives at Stormont. Their response to the COVID-19 pandemic beggars' belief and has done absolutely nothing to instil confidence within our community.

Yet again they have demonstrated that they are incapable of crisis management, strategic planning, leadership or Governing our country. To say that it is embarrassing to have to listen daily to the media expose their weakness and incompetence is an understatement and if it were not so serious it would be laughable. Our local political parties are as bad as each other and appear more interested in point scoring for personal political gain rather than dealing with the very serious issues that we all face. Our representatives have made blunder after blunder and appear incapable of getting anything right.

COVID-19 has spread at an alarming rate throughout our community with many people

very ill and hundreds losing their lives. Our National Health Service is under extreme pressure and close to breaking point, yet there appears to be no plan in place to fix it. Nobody can argue that the coronavirus has put a huge strain on our Health Service but unfortunately the Health Service was on the verge of collapse before COVID-19 arrived. Has all of our politicians forgot that this time last year our health service was in crisis, our hospitals had ran out of beds and patients lined their corridors on trollies; and in January this year our nurses went on strike due to poor pay and conditions and a shortage of 2,800 nurses. Did our Government do anything to address the huge challenges our Health Service faced before COVID-19 struck? The simple answer is no, yet again they are simply not capable of addressing such a huge challenge.

Unfortunately, our political representatives have turned the COVID-19 pandemic into a circus and pitched health against the economy. This is wrong as without your health you cannot have a vibrant

economy and without the economy you will not have an efficient health service. How did it ever get to this, our politicians should hang their heads in shame?

What makes me even more frustrated is that none of our elected representatives appear capable of accepting that they are getting things wrong. Can they not see how bad things have got and that it is their dithering, mixed messaging, bickering and lack of leadership that has us in the mess we are in.

Old Warren Resident.

Name and address supplied.

Dear Editor,

As predicted by many in the past few months, the pandemic blame game is now well and truly in full swing.

The debacle witnessed in Stormont recently gave rise to the point scoring and political maneuvering, which was much expected and predicted.

There seemed to be more u-turns initiated than a busy supermarket car park.

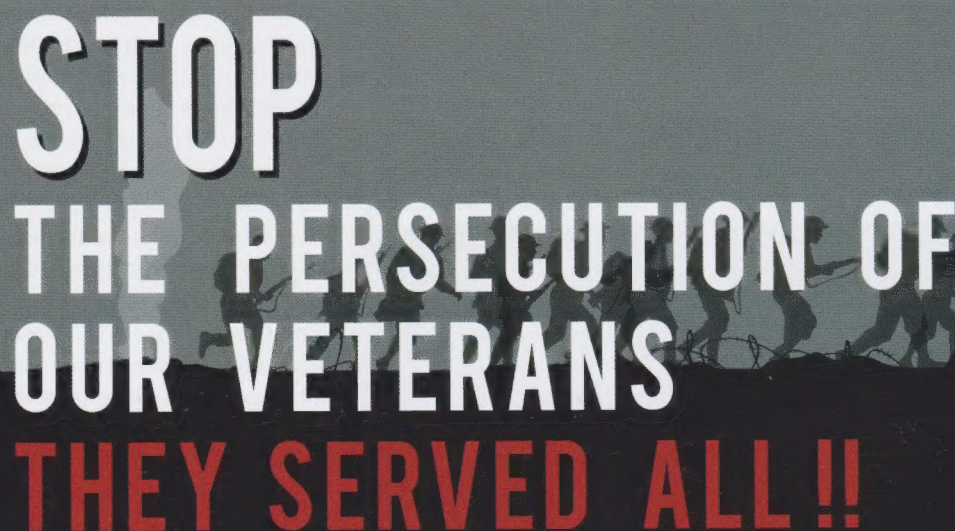
The only sensible comments surprisingly came from an SDLP MLA, whose only concern was that a decision either way should have been made far sooner than the mishmash of restrictions that eventually surfaced.

The use of the cross community veto by the DUP to effectively undermine a Unionist Health Minister could well do significant damage to the party's reputation in the months to come, and inevitably adds fuel to the blame game scenario.

Perhaps once this pandemic nightmare is over, the finger pointing individuals may well find themselves not as popular amongst their usual supporters.

It is a trying time for us all at the moment and so maybe we should all stick to the common sense process which has served us predominantly well so far, and take time to remember the antics of our so called political representatives when the next elections are duly upon us.

Stay Safe.



STOP THE PERSECUTION OF OUR VETERANS THEY SERVED ALL!!

Lest we forget